

New York

Inferno fouled with toxic cars, jammed spires
and roaring tubes, an unplanned sprawl of greed,
a warning to all future builders, seed
of riots in your festering slums, where fires
illuminate frustration of desires;
metropolis of plunder where victims bleed
in high-rise traps and hovels of dire need;
plague-sore, pig-Mafia-cursed, unfit for lyres.

Ah, no! A sea breeze comes to drive away
the smog-stench in your listless canyons, bring
the tonic of another fragrant spring.
Fire bombs are doused; old people smile and say,
"Fantastic city! Let's linger one more day!"
And lovers ask: "Will muggers strike us while we sing?"

The Muse of Youth

In my green and hopeful youth when first I tried
to woo the Muse, she seemed an illusive jade
with honied, melancholy songs, mermaid
for Keats and Shelley but never a yielding bride
for teens like Chatterton or me who vied
too soon for favors. Long newshawking stayed
the lesser hungers; watching the big parade,
I trudged on tuneless to life's eventide.

Bald prose, I'd argued, was the medium
for middle age of slaving compromise.
Scarred, beaten, little did I dream She'd come
when one, like Coleridge, worked without hope.
But now I know how Hardy saw her eyes
wink and regenerate his horoscope.

The Villa in Hampstead

Far from the noisy, clawing multitude
you sought a refuge here, wrote St. Mark's tale.
Thinking how Brother Tom grew spectre pale
and died, you mused on life's vicissitude;
with longings, fears, discoveries imbued
you listened here in Hampstead's quiet vale,
immortalized your lonely nightingale,
supreme ode for youth's melancholy mood.

Best loved bard of my teens, I come here late,
white-haired and haunted with ghosts of regret,
but in these hallowed rooms and garden learn
the ancient mariner and his coquette
can thrill to "light-winged dryad," "Grecian Urn;"
the love of poetry's a glorious fate.

-- Walter Snow

Coventry, Connecticut

Thomas Wyatt

It wasn't a bad life,
being friendly with the king
and trips all over Europe

and he couldn't know
how his son would be
cut down by Mary.

Wine and playing around
with complaints of love
and the falseness of women,
strumming pain on his lute
to mistresses who loved it,

until the trouble with
Anne Boleyn got worse.

So he stayed alone more
saying some of the things
he felt in ragged meter,
in which many of those court people
appear quite like animals

Sir Philip Sidney

Always the perfect
gentleman and probably
not bad as a lover,
making quite polite sonnets
and regular love

until he swallowed a
bullet in his thigh,
(having removed his armor
because his friend didn't
have any.)